

Verified by:



Filosoofi 31
50108 Tartu
Estonia

www.preferredbynature.org

Verification managed by:

Preferred By Nature

Contact person: Mateo Cariño
Fraise
Email:

mcarino@preferredbynature.org

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Forest Ecosystem Restoration

Verification

Assessment

Report for:

WeForest Zambia

in

Katanino, Zambia

Report Finalized: 7 July 2021
Audit Dates: 09 – 16 May 2021
Audit Team: Ivan Muir
Richard Zell Donovan

Certificate
issue/expiry: 06 July 2022

Organisation Contact: Anna Roesinger,
Carbon & Technology Manager

Contact details: anna.roesinger@weforest.org

TABLE of CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
1 AUDIT CONCLUSIONS	4
2 AUDIT PROCESS	5
3 Organization DETAILS	8
Annex I: FER standard conformance checklist (confidential). iError! Marcador no definido.	
Annex II: List of all visited sites (confidential)	iError! Marcador no definido.
Annex III: Detailed list of stakeholders consulted (confidential).....	iError! Marcador no definido.
Annex IV: List of documents and records (confidential)	iError! Marcador no definido.

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of an independent verification audit conducted by a team of specialists representing Preferred by Nature. The purpose of the audit was to evaluate the ecological, economic and social performance of WeForest restoration initiative in Katanino as defined by the established Forest Ecosystem Restoration Standard by Preferred by Nature.

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Note: Data presented in the reports shall be in metric system units.

1 AUDIT CONCLUSIONS

1.1 Audit Recommendation and verification decision

Based on Organisation's conformance with verification requirements, the following recommendation is made:

Verification approved:
Upon acceptance of NCR(s) issued below

Verification not approved:

Additional comments, including issues identified as controversial or hard to evaluate and explanation of the conclusion reached: NA

1.2 Non-conformity Reports (NCRs)

Check if no NCR(s) have been issued

1.3 Observations

Note: Observations are issued for the early stages of a problem which does not of itself constitute a non-conformance, but which the auditor considers may lead to a future non-conformance if not addressed by the organization; observations may lead to direct non-conformances if not addressed.

No observations

OBS: 01/21	Standard & Requirement:	Forest Ecosystem Restoration Field Verification Standard 1.0, 3.12
	Report Section	Annex I, 3.12
Description of findings leading to observation:	The vehicle being used to transport staff around is an open back pick up. This vehicle is required to travel on the largest arterial road in Zambia, the Great North road which links the capital city (Lusaka) to the Copperbelt (Ndola). Travelling in loading part of the pick up is a high risk means of transport as the pickup has no rails/side, no seats and no seat belts. In the event of any collision, the personnel will be flung from the vehicle.	
Observation:	The RM should ensure that transport conditions are safe as well when using large arterial roads.	

1.4 Stakeholder consultation

Prior to the audit, the stakeholder list was provided by WeForest. This list also provided a basis for the assessment team to select people for interviews (in person). With the limited time available, it was decided to sample a range of stakeholders from government, NGO's, private individual and the workers.

The aim of this stakeholder consultation was to assist the field assessment team in identifying any potential issues. The process of stakeholder interaction does not stop after the field visits, or for that matter, after even a verification decision is made. Preferred by Nature welcomes, at any time, comments on certified operations and such comments often provide a basis for the field assessment.

The table below summarizes the issues identified by the assessment team with a brief discussion of each based upon specific interview and/or public meeting comments.

Principle/Subject Area	Stakeholder comment	Preferred by Nature response
1: Planning	NA	
2: Tenure & Security	NA	
3: Implementation	<p>Facilitators are not happy with the fee being paid for constructing fire breaks.</p> <p>Nursery workers had no place to store their goods and had to cross a swamp with their equipment to be stored.</p>	<p>The audit team has confirmed that WeForest is paying K 520 per plot which is work for 4 persons for 3 – 5 days. This is equivalent to the legal minimum wage.</p> <p>WeForest has confirmed that new storage area at the nursery will be built. The plans, budget and approval process were verified</p>
4: Monitoring and Reporting	NA	

1.5 Actions taken by Organisation Prior to Report Finalization

NA

2 AUDIT PROCESS

2.2 Verification Standard Used

Standards Used (including version):	Forest Ecosystem Restoration Field Verification Standard 1.0
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Note that this standard is currently under revision by Preferred by Nature based on a number of "pilot tests" that are being conducted, input from technical and other

stakeholders, and further technical analysis. The term “pilot test” is used in this case to identify two facts:

- a) that the standard is being field-tested, and
- b) that WeForest has requested an independent verification of performance which will result in a public “verification letter” from Preferred by Nature verifying/validating performance at the field level.

2.3 Audit Team and accompanying persons

Name	Role and qualifications
Ivan Muir	The Lead Auditor is a Forester (B: Tech Forestry) with a Masters in Environmental Management (UFS) who was a FSC FM Lead Auditor for 10 years and a FSC COC Lead Auditor Trainer. He has audited and worked in more than 21 African countries over the last 25 years in various forests such a miombo, tropical and also plantations. He has participated in ISO14001 and OHSAS 18001 Lead Auditor Training.
Richard Donovan Zell	Senior forestry specialist with a Master’s in Natural Resources Management & Administration, with an emphasis on forest hydrology and community forestry. He provided technical support prior to, during and after the field work, and reviewed the draft report.
Mateo Cariño Frasse	Mateo is Land Use Program Manager at Preferred by Nature. As Forest engineer with a Master’s degree in Rural and Tropical Forestry, Mateo has gained extensive experience in forestry and carbon auditing (FSC, PEFC, CCB, VCS, Gold Standard, Plan Vivo, Carbon Footprint Management, etc.) and projects over 20 years globally. He has been training in forestry auditing, and is currently leading the PbN FER Initiative. Mateo speaks Spanish, French, English, and Portuguese. Mateo reviewed the draft report and will approve any verification statement that is released for this restoration project. He did not conduct field work.

2.4 Audit Overview

Note: The table below provides an overview of the audit scope and auditors. See standard checklist annex for specific details on people interviewed and audit findings per site audited.

Site(s)	Date(s)	Main activities	Auditor(s)
Katanino Forest Reserve	13 May 21	Field Visit	Ivan Muir
Oposhi, Bwengu & Serenje Areas	14 May 21	Field Visit	Ivan Muir
Kolako School	15 May 21	Document Review	Ivan Muir
Total number of person days used in the field: 4 (not including days spent in preparation, travel or post-field work analysis, writing and review) = numbers of auditors participating 1 X number of days spent in preparation, on site and post site visit follow-up including stakeholder consultation 4.			

2.5 Description of Overall Audit Process

This audit was a “pilot test verification” of this restoration project. In addition to testing the restoration standard, Preferred by Nature will provide to WeForest a public statement verifying field performance.

There was no pre-assessment visit allocated for this audit as the project has two components. The first component is the rehabilitation of the Katanino Forest Reserve (KFR) and a number of farmers who are part of the small scale operation.

The forestry type throughout the project area is Miombo woodland which is the dominant forest type in the area. The KFR has remnants of Mashito evergreen dry forest.

There are 5 areas that have 358 farmers as follows:

Serenje – 58

Bwengo – 87

Oposhi – 78

Kabamba – 79

Biwa - 56

The farmers have all set aside a minimum of 2 lima (approx. 0.5 ha where 1 lime = 0.25 ha) so all the sizes of the farm were uniform in size. In addition, they are all privately owned. A total of 14 of the farmers were visited.

3 of the 5 Zones within the Katanino project were visited, namely Oposhi Bwengo, and Serenje. Oposhi, situated adjacent to the Katanino Resettlement Zone, was the higher risk of the 5 zones and more time was spent here.

Adjacent to these 5 zones were zones with the same names but outside the FMU. Of the 5 sites, 3 sites were visited namely Kebamba, Biwa and Serenje.

The first two days of the audit were spent in the field. The forest reserve was visited first and the day after the farmers and ANR were visited. Stakeholders were also visited during the field trip. The last day was spent in the office reviewing documents.

2.5.1 List of FMUs selected for evaluation

FMU Name	Rationale for Selection
Oposhi	There were 5 Zones within the Katanino FMU and 3 of these sites were visited, namely Oposhi, Bwengo, and Serenje. Oposhi situated adjacent to the Katanino Resettlement Zone, was the higher risk of the 5 zones and more time was spent here.
Bwengo	Bwengo had the Luampesa headwater and cultural site.

Serenje	The nursery is located in the Serenje area.
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2.5.2 List of management aspects reviewed by assessment team

Type of site	Sites visited	Type of site	Sites visited
Road construction		Illegal settlement	
Soil drainage		Bridges/stream crossing	
Workshop		Chemical storage	
Tree nursery	1	Wetland	1
Planned Harvest site		Steep slope/erosion	
Ongoing Harvest site		Riparian zone	1
Completed logging		Planting	1
Soil scarification		Direct seeding	
Planting site		Weed control	
Felling by harvester		Natural regeneration	14
Felling by forest worker		Endangered species	
Skidding/Forwarding		Wildlife management	
Clearfelling/Clearcut		Nature Reserve	1
Shelterwood management		Key Biotope	
Selective felling		Special management area	1
Sanitation cutting		Historical site	
Pre-commercial thinning		Recreational site	
Commercial thinning		Buffer zone	1
HQ	1	Local community	3

3 Organization DETAILS

3.2 Organization specific background information

Ownership and land tenure description (legal and customary)

In Zambia there are 3 types of tenure, that include State Land (owned and managed by the State, such as national forests) and customary land, where the land is owned by the local chief (however the land may be assigned for use to a particular family or farmer). A fee is sometimes paid for the use of this land. The third type of tenure is private ownership.

There are 2 type of areas involved in this project. The first area is the Katanino Forest Reserve which was heavily degraded due to illegal settlers over exploiting the resources. They have subsequently been relocated and the KFR is being rehabilitated. This forest reserve, like all the forest reserves in Zambia, are on State Land. The second type is the private farms.

Legislative and government regulatory context

Zambia is a multiparty representative democracy whose head of state is the president. The constitution established in 1991 serves as the framework for the Zambian political system. Zambia gained independence in 1964 after which it became a republic under the 1964 constitution. Under the leadership of Kenneth Kaunda (1964-1991), Zambia became a one-

party state after the introduction of the 1973 constitution. However, tensions and opposition to party monopoly of the United National Independence Party led to the reintroduction of multiparty politics in 1991 and marked the end of Kaunda's rule.

The legislature is comprised of the president and the National Assembly. Zambia has a unicameral national assembly of 158 members, eight of whom the president nominates, while the citizens elect 150 for five-year terms. Members of the national assembly elect the speaker. The legislature drafts and passes national laws in the form of bills. For a bill to become law, the president has to approve and sign it.

(Source: *What Type Of Government Does Zambia Have? - WorldAtlas*)

Environmental Context

Zambia has an estimated deforestation rate of 250,000 to 300,000 hectares per year. This is the second highest per capita deforestation rate in Africa and the fifth highest in the world. Studies of drivers of deforestation and degradation have identified agricultural expansion, unsustainable wood fuel production, unmanaged timber extraction, bush fires, mining, land use and infrastructure development as the proximate drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. The underlying causes are underpinned by demographic, economic, technological, policy and institutional as well as cultural causes. Poverty and population increase are two principal underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation in the country. This is due to the fact that rural populations rely heavily on the forest for their sustenance and informal economic activities such as charcoal production and sale. Forest products make a significant contribution to rural livelihoods in Zambia as they are a source of fuel, shelter, food, pasture and fodder, medicinal plants and household utility items. Therefore, the local people regard forests as a pharmacy, supermarket, a building supply store and a grazing resource⁷. In addition, forest provide employment and business opportunities such as pitsawing and trading in non - timber forest products such as fruits, mushrooms and honey. Forests are also used as a coping strategy and a safety net when rural households are faced with stresses and shocks.

The Copperbelt province where Katanino Forest Reserve is located is one of the highly deforested provinces in Zambia today as it faces serious challenges through encroachments, illegal exploitations of forest resources in both the open forests and protected forest areas as well as on agricultural land. The illegal exploitation of forest resources is mostly done without due regard for the existing laws governing sustainable management of forest resources in the province or the country at large (Source: *Katanino Project Document, 01 Dec 2020*).

Socioeconomic Context

Katanino Forest has lost an extensive amount of forest cover in recent years (2013-2017) with over 2020 ha or 42% of the reserve already deforested and an additional 880 ha or 18% of forest strongly degraded. To date, 'reforestation' efforts in the area have been limited and restricted to small pockets outside the forest reserve.

The local population around Katanino is heterogenous and includes over 13 different tribal groups. This is the result of historical immigration – pensioners or retrenches from nearby mining towns and farmers from the drought prone Southern Province have settled in the area. According to 2003 data, about 20,000 people live in or around Katanino Forest.

Studies have shown that before 2012, the use of Katanino forest resources was relatively low and only contributed to ~ 3% of household income. But between 2013 – 2017 there was a rapid depletion of resources surrounding the forest brought about by easy access to markets provided by the highway and a growing population which has increased the pressure on forest resources. In 5 years, 42% of the forest has been lost; a trend that is

likely to increase in the coming years if there is no intervention (Source: Katanino Project Document, 01 Dec 2020).

3.3 General overview of the organization and scope

WeForest is a non-profit organization that is based in Belgium and is engaged in restoration projects in a number of countries. The Luanshya project was the first of its kind in Zambia. This was followed up by the Katanino Project.

Katanino Forest Reserve is a 5,600 ha forest situated in Masaiti (95%) and Mpongwe Districts (5%), in Copperbelt Province, Zambia. Local Chiefs and the Forest Department vocalized the need to interfere in the project area, alarmed by the rapid deforestation (up to 42% as of 2017) and significant forest degradation (up to 18% as of 2017).. Under a business-as-usual scenario, detrimental impacts on the environment and the livelihoods of the local people and beyond are unavoidable. The project is aiming to curb the current trend and establish a sustainable community-based forest management system.

The project is built around Joint Forest Management defined in the Forest Act (2015). The Act ensures local stewardship, sustainable management and use of forest resources by the local community while meeting their socio-economic needs through direct benefits in line with fairness and justice using a bottom-up approach. Therefore, WeForest is developing an agreement with the Katanino Forest Trust, to oversee the management of the reserve for the following 10 years (2019 – 2029). This facilitates the gradual transfer of forest resource ownership to the local communities through the eventual establishment of Community Forest Management.

WeForest will work closely with the local communities and authorities to restore the Forest Reserve to health through (A) improving the governance system, (B) establishing alternative livelihoods which will reduce the pressure on forest resources, and (C) ecological activities including Assisted Natural Regeneration. This technique facilitates growth of naturally regenerating trees by protecting them against threats such as intense fires and overgrazing. A Multi-sectorial Forest Management Plan is co-developed and implemented upon approval by all stakeholders.

The main Project Partners of WeForest and their roles are as follows:

- **Forest Department:** Their role is to implement (law enforcement) and provide guidelines and supervision for the management, restoration as well as facilitating and regulating forest industries.
- **Katanino Forest Trust:** Comprised of the Joint Forest Management Committee (JFMC) and the local community of Katanino. The JFMC draws representation from Heads of various Government Departments at the District level that deal with natural resources, social welfare and health; Traditional Authority representatives, Village Resource Management Committees (VRMCs); District Council and Forest user groups. The JFMC role is to sustainably manage Katanino Forest Reserve and ensure benefits are equitably shared with the local community and management responsibilities are shared between the local community and other stakeholders.
- **District Development Coordinating Committee (DDCC):** This committee is at the District administration level and oversee all activities in the district to ensure that they are in line with the district, provincial and country plans and does this through the sub committee on natural resources represented by the Agricultural sector, Water and Energy Sector, Forestry Sector and the Wildlife Sector at the District level.

- Research institute: The project has started engaging the Copperbelt University (Improved forest management in Katanino Joint Forest Management Area 2019.09.06)

The Katanino Forest Reserve is seen as an opportunity to implement a project which aims to:

- (a) build local capacity to effectively transfer power and ownership of the forest to the communities and

- (b) restore the forest through assisted natural regeneration.

To this effect, WeForest is developing an agreement with the Katanino Trust, to oversee the management of the reserve for the following 10 years (2019 - 2029), to progressively handover the management of the Reserve to the communities through Community Forest Management. WeForest has already secured commitments from private sector sponsors to implement the forest restoration work.

To secure this opportunity, management responsibilities and ownership at local level need to be clarified and understood through a coordinated, multi-stakeholder process. There is need to:

- (a) engage with communities and other stakeholders to gather the necessary socio-economic and natural resource baseline data to

- (b) develop the Multi-sectoral Forest Management Plan and

- (c) begin the process of Community Forest Management, in preparation for the forest restoration work and alternative livelihoods development work.

To prepare the community for full transfer of ownership of the forest resource:

- i. There is need to offer support to communities to gather social, economic and forest resource data through a comprehensive participatory mapping, participatory forest resource assessment, Forest inventory and land use planning exercise to clarify boundaries, better understand socio-economic needs and resource availability and
- ii. Strengthening the relationship and collaboration between communities, customary leaders and government entities by:
 - Reactivating Village Resource Management Groups in Katanino
 - Establish a Joint Forest Management Committee in Katanino
 - Facilitating the co-development and validation of a Multi-sectoral Forest Management Plan for Katanino Forest Reserve, which will include the development of an alternative livelihood programme. The multi-sectoral Forest Management Plan will clearly define responsibilities, benefit-sharing and risk management, based on local and customary concepts of equity and justice. This bottom-up process will then be followed by a co-management agreement that gradually transfers the rights and ownership of Katanino Forest Reserve to the local communities.

These activities are implemented prior to the restoration work, for which site-specific and transparent extension strategies is developed and informed by the Multi-sectoral Forest Management Plan using baseline data collected in the initiation phase of the project. Ultimately, a full transfer of ownership to the latter is envisaged to ensure (a) direct benefits and incentives to the local communities and (b) continuity in the stewardship and sustainable use and management of the forest. Once natural resources are restored, this will ensure that these are used and managed sustainably by the primary users of those resources while meeting local social and economic needs (as per the Katanino Project Document, 01 Dec 2020).